

# STORIES OF FAITH

## Deborah the Prophetess

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### OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we thank you that you are our saviour, the author of history, and the one true source of life. Give us courage and hope as we explore your Word to us today.

### SETTING THE SCENE

Since the start of the year, we've been exploring what faith looks like through some Old Testament characters. These intimate portraits are challenging and hopeful stories about people just like us; flawed and seeking to follow God. The Book of Judges has been described as "tragedy literature," which describes Israel's steady descent into chaos as the generations after Joshua forgot about God and what he'd done for them. Having failed to clear the land of Canaanite religious practices as God had instructed, the Israelites come to trust in Canaanite gods to bring them peace and prosperity. Their cultural zeitgeist was similar to ours, summed up by the defining verse: "In those days all the people did what was right in their own eyes."

But serving Baal didn't bring the blessings they'd hoped for and Israel was cruelly oppressed by the Canaanites for 20 years. Into this crisis, God sends a series of judges as "mini-saviours" to set his people free and the fourth judge was "Deborah the Prophetess." She was the only female leader of ancient Israel and she led with faith, courage, and determination. This is her story.

### AS A GROUP READ JUDGES 4 AND 5

Both chapters tell the story of Deborah's and Barak's victory over Sisera from different angles.

### IN PAIRS DISCUSS

What are a few things about Deborah and this story that stand out for you? Are there any things that are confusing or troubling?

### COMMENT

Unlike most of Israel's judges in this book, Deborah is a shining example of faith. She trusts God with an "undivided heart" and personifies "brave spirituality." Pastor and author Tim Keller describes it like this: "God's call to his people (then and now) is to combine spirituality with bravery. True discipleship is radical and risk-taking, because true disciples rely on God to keep his promises to bless them, and not on their own instincts, plans, or insurance policies." (Judges for You, Tim Keller).

## FOR DISCUSSION (in Pairs or as a Group).

1. In what ways does Deborah demonstrate “brave spirituality” or courageous faith in this story?
2. What gives her so much confidence to call Barak to fight Sisera and to hold her nerve as the plan unfolds?
3. Has there been a situation where God asked you to step out in faith that required courage? How did you discern God’s calling and how did you respond? What did you learn from the experience?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Deborah heard God’s plan to free the Israelites and responded with bold and determined faith. Are there any “God-sized” prayers you need to pray about any situations you’re facing right now?



